Virtual Teaching Academy Kickoff Part One

Spearheaded by University of Phoenix and Blackboard, the Alliance for Virtual Learning is a collective of leading experts with a mission of helping educators create a blueprint for the future of virtual education that meets the academic and emotional needs of all students. This is the first in a series of kickoff webinars—leading up to the Summer Virtual Teaching Academy, June 26-July 1—will feature a moderated panel discussion that engages district leaders who have successfully helped their schools adapt to new ways of teaching and learning amidst COVID-19. Panelists will discuss the steps their districts took before March that enabled them to succeed, what they're learning now and where their districts are today. The webinar is an opportunity for education leaders, teachers and experts to reflect on the K-12 education system's response to the pandemic as they begin thinking about the 2020-2021 school year and beyond. Moderator: Tom Vander Ark, CEO of Getting Smarter, and author of books including "Getting Smart," "Navigating the Digital Shift," "Smart Cities," "Smart Parents," "Better Together" and "The Power of Place." Panelists: John Woods, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer and Provost, University of Phoenix Michael Horn, MBA, Senior Partner, Entangled Solutions, a strategy consultancy for the education ecosystem, and author of "Choosing College." Julie Young: CEO of Arizona State University Digital Prep High School Lea Ann Lockard, MEA, Executive Director, Texas Connections Academy, an online school Thomas Tucker, Ph.D., Superintendent, Douglas County School District, Cincinnati, Ohio Pete Just, Chief Technology & Operations Officer, Metropolitan School District, Wayne Township, Indianapolis, Indiana

(thudding)

Good morning to all of you who are joining us today.

Thanks for jumping on with us.

We're excited to share some really

great information with you, (incoherent chattering)

and hear from some great panelists today.

You are in the right spot, and we're gonna get started in about five minutes here.

So sit tight, grab that last cup of coffee before we get going, and we will kick things off shortly.

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(rustling) (thudding)

(tapping)

(electronic buzzing)

(tapping)

(thudding)

(grinding)

(electronic buzzing) (clattering)

Good morning, everybody.

Thanks for jumping on with us this morning.

Really excited to get started.

Before we jump into the webinar, a couple of really quick housekeeping issues for those of you that may not be familiar with a GoToWebinar.

In today's session, we will not have live mics for our audience.

Our presenters will obviously be mic'd, and we'll get to see their faces.

If you have questions, we would encourage you to use the question panel on the right hand side of your screen.

As you submit your questions, we will have team members on our side that will be watching those, and we can kinda feed those to our panelists.

We'll get to as many questions as we can, and we'll try and kind of group those so that it makes sense.

But go ahead and use the question panel for those.

Some questions we may be able to answer directly in chat, and others, we'll address with our panelists.

This webinar will be recorded today.

So if you have to drop out, or you miss a piece of this, or you just wanna go back and re-visit a particularly good nugget of information, you will receive a link to the recording of this webinar following this session today.

So rest assured, you don't have to worry too much about screenshot ting things, or taking notes.

You can come back and watch that recording anytime.

And with that, I'm gonna go ahead and pass the mic to John Woods.

John, why don't you get us started today? Great, thanks so much.

Welcome, everybody.

We're glad you joined us this morning or this afternoon, depending on where you are.

I'm John Woods, the provost and chief academic officer at the University of Phoenix.

This is the first in a series of webinars.

Our next one will be on June 17th.

So keep a close eye on the microsite that we created for details about that event, and use that as your registration, not only for that event, but for other subsequent webinars that we have planned.

So really quickly, before I get started, just a couple of comments, a little bit more housekeeping.

Feel free to ask questions.

Like we said, as things come up, ask questions in the chat.

Use that question section to the right, and submit those, and we'll do our best to get to as many of those throughout the discussion moving forward here this morning.

A little of background on why we've created this Alliance for Virtual Learning with Blackboard, and some other K-12 leaders.

And they're bringing you this event today, and more events in the future.

K-12 education has been permanently changed by COVID-19, and I think we're all well aware of that.

Schools have moved extremely quickly to pivot to virtual and remote learning, and that meant that teachers had to pivot their classrooms to a completely different way of delivering education, and some had lots of support, and some left.

Some had some clear guidance, and some left.

It was all about trying to keep students engaged, and maintain learning, and continuity, and we saw a lot of variability in that across the country.

It highlighted the need for some thinking about the longer-term approach to virtual learning, and it really prompted us to conduct a study, and we surveyed over a thousand teachers in K-12 from across the country, and we found that a couple really important things stood out from our survey findings.

Less than half, 47%, felt that the training was either good or excellent to help them make this pivot, and that was really surprising.

And perhaps even more surprising, we found that 84% were not sure how to leverage online technology in ways that were compelling for their students.

And so with those, and some other findings, we launched the Alliance for Virtual Learning, and in doing so, we brought together some leading minds in K-12 education and virtual learning to provide a comprehensive curriculum and some resources to support district leaders and educators alike moving forward.

A little bit about our partners involved in this endeavor.

We're working with Blackboard.

Nearly one in two students nationwide use Blackboard for various services, and so they were a natural partner for us in looking at how we might support K-12 across the United States.

Dr. Pat Hoge is someone that we work closely with in putting all this together.

She's a veteran educator, and a long time veteran of online learning, and in that space, she served as chief academic officer formerly for Pearson, and for Connections Education.

She has devoted much of her career to helping students, and the adults who serve those students, identify the tools that are needed to be successful in virtual and online learning.

We're also working with Heath Morrison, who's the former president of McGraw-Hill, the Schools Division or Schools Group.

Heath brings extensive experience in the K-12 education space, including a long history serving as a principle and a superintendent.

He's leveraging his connections with superintendents across the country to help us to work with folks, and provide some great advice across the space as people are trying to pivot to online and remote learning in a way that might meet their needs as those needs evolve.

First, ultimately, are really all about helping students.

For us, this is a time of figuring out how we can give back in partnership with Blackboard, and the experts I've talked about.

And our moderator for today is someone that's well-known, and will certainly help us with everything we're working on in the next months ahead, Tom Vander Ark.

We're pleased to have Tom join us.

He's been recognized as a powerful advocate for learning experience.

He's the CEO of Getting Smart.

He advises school districts and networks across the country, different education foundations, and funding groups that he works with to help them have a greater impact on education.

He's a prolific writer and speaker, as many of you are probably familiar, and his most recent book was called "The Power of Place: Authentic Learning Through Place-Based Education".

Last year's book was called "Better Together: How to Leverage School Networks For Smarter Personalized and Project Based Learning".

And he writes frequently for "Forbes" and GettingSmart.com.

So without further ado, I'm gonna turn it over to Tom now.

Thank you again for joining all of us, and really, really lookin' forward to the series ahead.

We have, as I said before, other plans as well.

We'll have information about all of our other offerings on the webpage.

There'll be a track for administrators, and a track for teachers.

We're really excited about all of this, and hope you find it helpful.

So without further ado, I turn it over to you, Tom.

Great, Thank you, John.

Great to join you.

Thanks, everybody for bein' with us today.

We have a terrific panel, and we're gonna have a lively conversation.

I'm gonna roughly partition our conversation into what the heck is happening right now.

What does it mean? And then we're gonna turn our attention in the last third to talking about the future of learning, both starting with re-opening schools, but then moving into the future.

Before I introduce our panelists, I wanna say a couple things.

First of all, I want to acknowledge that we're living through a really, really difficult time that very, very suddenly two months ago, the US and then world, the economy was really put into a self-induced coma that threw almost half of the American workforce out of work, or dramatically reduced hours, or salaries.

And along with closing schools, that really put tens of millions of young people in a very, very precarious situation.

And I wanna start by acknowledging the hardship that so many families, so many parents, and so many kids have are are living through.

Secondly, I wanna acknowledge, that with the closure of schools, and the really quick, in many cases, unplanned shift to remote learning, just the tens of thousands of teachers and leaders that have just done heroic work in the last few months, and I wanna start by saying thank you to them for the amazing, agile, tireless work that has gone on in the last two months in so many different systems.

You'll hear some stories about that today.

So with a word of concern and a word of thanks, I want just to acknowledge, it's been said a lot of times, but the unprecedented situation that we're living in.

It struck me over the last two months, that we're living through a period of novelty, complexity, and sudden mutuality, and those, I think, are bywords that need to now be incorporated fully into education.

These sort of things are not, this pandemic is not entirely new.

If we think back to the crazy wildfires in California in the last two years, and then, Lea Ann, you know too well the hurricanes that we faced in Houston.

Marie had two gigantic storms months apart from each other, storms that we though were sort of, you know, one in a century kinds of storms.

And what all of this suggests to me, that when you layer on top the rise of artificial intelligence, and the disruption that it's creating, the rise of climate change, and the disruption that it's creating, that we're living through a period of time where the unexpected is the new norm.

This is what our kids' lives are gonna look like in this 21st century.

They're gonna live through a series of events that have never been experienced, and in many cases, have never even been anticipated.

And for all of us who are living through a period of real humility, are realizing that we're with our kids experiencing and learning things that we had just never anticipated.

So one broader question that I'm hoping our panelists can help lean into is, how do we incorporate more of that dealing with novelty, complexity, how do we incorporate more mutuality into the experiencing that we're creating for young people? We finished a century where our schools were places of routine and compliance, and now our kids are at home goin', "Mom and Dad, what is this all about?".

And so how with them can we embrace complexity, and do it with a new sense of mutuality? I want, as we reflect on what just happened, I wanna acknowledge that it showed very quickly a set of inequity in America that was greater than I had anticipated.

I think, like a lot of advocates for online and blended learning, I had sort of patted myself on the back, that over the last 15 years, that we made a lot of progress, that most schools were very close to one to one, and had wifi, and had pretty good blended learning programs, and then all of a sudden, we found out it wasn't quite that good, and where the big inequities were were home access to wifi, take home devices, at home wifi.

We've just seen very, very quickly that things are quite inequitable in America, and that it's divided by race, and class, and geography in really stark and uncomfortable ways, and we're gonna talk about how we dive into that.

I do want to acknowledge that hundreds, maybe thousands of districts were very, very well positioned, and I wanna give a shout out to so many of the leaders that just seamlessly took their teacher teams into a virtual environment, and have been serving their kids so, so well.

Julie, I wanna give a shout out to our friends in Miami and Broward.

Big districts that very well, and very quickly moved their blended program into the virtual space.

Julie, I think it has a lot to do with your leadership in Florida over the last 30 years.

Thank you. Those districts are

in such good shape because you walked alongside them for 15 years, and got them to a place that they were ready for this, you know? They're a place that are ready for hurricanes, and they were ready with blended learning.

And so dealing with crisis, and shifting to virtual was somethin' that happened really well in a lot of Florida, the big Florida districts, and it's in large part due to Julie's leadership there.

I wanna give a shout out to a lot of the personalized and competency-based districts that we've featured on Getting Smart.

Lindsay Unified has just done a terrific job.

Cajon Valley is a little K-8 district that has done a great job.

Our friends in Huntley in Chicago, an example of a big suburban school district that has just done a terrific job.

So education leaders around the country have made this shift really, really well, because they were really well prepared.

But I would say, the majority of American school districts have really struggled, and we're gonna talk about that.

Last observation that we're gonna come back to is, as I said in my "Forbes" post yesterday, I think it's made it really clear that school leaders now have about 90 days to make some updates in four areas.

One is that it's absolutely critical that every school in America have a really strong blended core academic program.

Two, that it's gonna have to operate seamlessly with a remote program, or a virtual program, because I think we're gonna see in a lot of places kids movin' back and forth from everybody being on-site, to everybody being back at home, or small groups of teachers and students moving.

So a seamless remote program.

Secondly, we're gonna have to put in place a lot of protocols to make sure that when we do on-site education that it's done safely.

So we'll talk about that.

And then, finally, as the leaders on this call will attest, we've seen a huge uptick in online learning, both in K-12 and even more so in higher education, and I think every school district in America is gonna want to either create, or better yet, partner with an online school, because we're gonna see a really strong interest from families in online learning, hybrid learning, co-op learning, microschools, all these new options that sit on top of a really robust online learning program.

So that's a little bit of my take on the path forward.

We are fortunate to have five folks that know more about that than I do, and I wanna introduce some friends to you.

I'm gonna make really quick introductions, inadequate introductions, given the nature of this group, and then I may add more as we continue.

But our panel today is gonna include Michael Horn.

Michael just wrote a terrific book called "Choosing College".

Michael and I have a great podcast on that on Getting Smart.

Take a look at it, but it really unpacks the five reasons that people go to college.

Some good, and some less good, and just that framework I think is super important for people thinking about college, especially right now, for parents and for counselors.

Michael, until last week, was a Senior Partner at Entangled Solutions.

This morning, he's a Senior Advisor to Guild Education.

Michael, that's a super exciting acquisition that was announced yesterday, right? Indeed, indeed, I'm excited about it, but also excited for this conversation.

But yeah, big, big changes, Tom.

So Guild Education, as many of you know, is a Denver-based unicorn.

It's a very valuable company that has popularized the term, "education as a benefit", and they're helping many companies add education opportunities as employee benefits.

And last week, they acquired Entangled Solutions, where Michael had led strategy.

And so we're very excited about that.

Stay tuned for another podcast with Michael, where we're gonna dive into that in some more detail.

So Michael, thank you for joining us.

And then, my friend, Julie Young.

Julie is a long time friend and a long time leader in online and virtual education.

She's the VP of Education Outreach and Student Services at ASU.

You have a bigger job that you did six months ago, is that right, Julie? Yeah, a little bit bigger, yep, from now on.

ASU, as many of you know, is often called the most innovative university in the world, and that's part of why Julie is there, just helping them innovate both in the high ed space, but especially in the K-12 space.

So Julie leads ASU Prep Academy, a very cool network of K-12 schools in Arizona, as well as ASU Prep Digital.

But all of you know Julie from her groundbreaking work at Florida Virtual, which she claims was the first state-wide virtual school.

I like to claim credit for that with a tiny, little school that I started here in Washington.

Julie's school very quickly got bigger than mine, and Julie really pioneered high quality online learning in the state of Florida.

Julie, I have Governor Bush comin' on the podcast in a week or so.

But Julie had the good fortune to work in Florida when Governor Bush was there, and Governor Bush was a real advocate for high quality online learning.

And Julie's success there in Florida was not only creating high quality services for families, but partnering with school districts across the state, and it's part of why I made in my opening remarks that the state of Florida, I think, has shifted much more seamlessly and much more effectively than most other states, and it's partly because of Julie's leadership there.

And I think you're calling in from Florida today, right, Julie? I am.

I am in Florida today.

Well, it's awesome to catch up with you.

Julie and I were also long-term board members of iNACOL Aurora, the Aurora Institute.

Julie, are you still on the board there? I just got off the board after, what has it been? I think 20, 23 years, somethin' like that.

Actually, 17 years.

We really appreciate your leadership in blended personalized online and virtual space.

Thank you. I new friend of mine

is Pete Just.

Hello, Pete.

Pete's joining us from Indianapolis.

He's the CTO and COO of the Metropolitan Wayne Township School District.

It's the western part of Indianapolis.

Pete was a biology and science teacher for a long time, and then Pete was also an early leader in state-wide online schools.

He helped launch Indianan's first online school, and then launched the Achieve Virtual Education Academy in 2011.

Pete's been a long time leader in Indiana Ed Tech.

He created the Indiana Chief Technology Officer Council, and he's been influential, and an advisor to the State Department.

So Pete, we're happy to have you with us today.

Glad to be here.

And then, Dr. Thomas Tucker is joining us from Douglas County.

Dr. Tucker, that's where I lived last in Colorado, beautiful Douglas County.

If you don't know it, it sits up on a plateau just south of Denver, and it has a spectacular view of the entire front range.

It's a growing and interesting community, the whole south area of Metropolitan Denver.

Many of you know Dr. Tucker from his groundbreaking work in the Princeton City schools in Ohio.

For his leadership there, AASA called him, "the superintendent of the year".

The National Alliance of Black School Education, Black School Educators also named Dr. Tucker the superintendent of the year.

But in many ways, Dr. Tucker's been a leader in personalized and blended learning.

Dr. Tucker, we're happy to have you with us today.

I think you're callin' in from Colorado? That is correct.

Beautiful Lone Tree, Colorado.

Hi. Great to have you

with us, Dr. Tucker.

And then, finally, Lea Ann Lockard is callin' in from Houston, where she's a long time teacher and leader.

Lea Ann's the Executive Director of Texas' Connections Academy, which is a very cool partnership between Pearson Online and Houston ISD.

Lea Ann's been there for 11 years, and now, grew that program from just a couple hundred kids to serving 6,000 kids across Texas in grades 3 to 12.

Lea Ann, that's a neat partnership that you have with Houston ISD, right? It is, very much so.

Lea Ann has been for 20 years a leader in online and virtual space, so.

We have an amazing group of panelists.

More on each of them as we progress.

But let me dive in by asking my friend, Michael Horn, what the heck just happened? What's your take on what we just went through in the last two months? Yeah, absolutely, and, you know, I come at this from two perspectives, as you know, Tom.

One is, obviously, having studied a lot of these questions, and online learning, and blended learning, and then, obviously, being pretty close to a lot of districts and schools as they've been forced to make this shift.

And frankly, as society has struggled to know what's going on at any point.

I mean, we've all remarked that each day right now feels like an entire week, and the guidance and situation is changing constantly.

And so in some ways, adaptability, flexibility, fluidity are the new skill, power skills, amidst this time just to be able to keep coping, but I also come to this as a parent of 5 1/2-year-old twins, who have been going through it, and sort of as I've adjusted to the realities of shifts with my wife to homeschool, and seeing how the school that they go to has reacted in this time.

It strikes me that, amidst this big shift, that there have been a lot of calls of, you know, is there a new normal, things have changed forever, and I guess what I would say, it's not entirely clear to me how this breaks in the longer run still, because while I think we're certainly going to live under uncertainty and so forth for some time, and much longer than with my higher education hat on.

Some college presidents have proclaimed that, "Business will be back to usual in the fall".

That seems to me,

wildly out of touch, (Tom speaking incoherently)

and overly optimistic.

Not even close.

Yeah, it's-- I (speaking incoherently)

to a podcast running yesterday, that you thought some places could be down 10 or even 20%, right? Yeah, I think that's right.

I think you're gonna see enrollment really nosedive, and I think big reason for that is, that while there are, as you said, some exemplarily schools that have made this shift as seamlessly as could be imagined, there are a lot of places where the teachers, students, parents are gonna look at the last couple months, and say, "Well, gosh, we adapted as well as we possibly could have".

"We did all we could." "You know, we delivered meals to families that needed them, and all this, and never again." "We don't wanna go to this." "The moment we can re-open school, and go back physically, let's just go full board back to that." And so I do think that there's opportunity in this moment to innovate, but I also think that there is some risks that we have to be realistic and not tone deaf to.

You know, this is not the sort of disruptive education that you wrote about.

Everybody knows your name because you co-authored "Disrupting Class" with Clay.

I hadn't thought about askin' you this, but, you know, in "Disrupting Class", a lot of people get disruption wrong, right? Yeah.

This disruption, there's a theory about it, and it's really low priced innovations that come in, and then add functionality, and expand access to markets, but this is a different disruption that you wrote about.

How is it different than the theory that you and Clay have really advanced in the last 20 years? Yeah, I mean, what's so interesting about that, is that it's very hard to find parallels, and, you know, analogs, where the disruption that we write about, exactly as you said, Tom, those low priced, more accessible innovations, they root themselves with people that don't have access to the most expensive, or the best of the best experiences that exist then, but then these primitive, low cost things get better, and better, and better.

What's so interesting about the current moment, is we've all sorta been thrust into this role of what we said non-consumers, unable to access Great.

schooling as we knew it, and so we've been sort of thrust into the disruption of online learning.

But I think our reference point is still what we had, right? You know, disruption, we always say, "The cool thing is, "it gets to compete against the alternative, which is nothing at all".

Right. And while

in some sense that's our reality, I think a lot of us are emotionally and socially very much hanging on to what we have, and hoping that we have it again.

And so that's why a lot of the writing I've done at "Education Next" and so forth over the last few months has been, this doesn't clearly break very well for online learning.

Like certain places that do it well will build a lot of momentum.

I think it will send a very clear signal that districts, to your point in the opening, they have to have preparedness plans that have robust Right. online learning,

because while the public is very empathetic this time around, I do not believe that they will be as empathetic if this happens again, or the longer this stretches on.

Yeah. And then thirdly,

the last dynamic of this, is that, at the the margins, there will be people who say, "Gosh, that was a better experience", or, "I got introduced to this cool, new tool that I wanna now bring into my school environment", or, "You know, why do I think that "every single student should be in the exact same place "just because they were born in the year of the monkey", right? Like these assumptions we make in schooling are not, they don't make a heck of a lot of sense, and I do think it's lifting the lid on that to a lot of people throughout society, and parents that are looking at the work, the low-level work that a lot of their kids are doing, worksheets, and very analog things, and they're asking big questions.

And so I think at the margins, you're gonna see a bunch of schools and communities start to say, "Let's take advantage of this opportunity to innovate", and there will be tremendous Great. positive in those pockets.

Let me plug Michael's podcast.

Future U is a terrific weekly podcast looking at high education.

So if any of you wanna dive into the implications of the pandemic, and what the next couple years look like, Future U, with your friend Jeff Selingo, is a terrific resource.

Julie, just a quick take in your role of sort of national thought leader, how do you summarize what just happened? You know, I think we talk about it being a disrupter.

I think I would also kind of coin the phrase of it just being an interrupter, Yeah. just interrupted everything

without a plan, and as we look across the nation, I think what we saw was paralysis more than anything, just almost like somebody Yeah. just punched

the education system in the stomach, and it was hard to catch their breaths, Yeah. we're still trying.

And so I agree with Michael, in that the parents and the communities have been empathetic, Yeah. but that will not last.

Julie, in our area here in Washington was so poorly prepared that the initial guidance from both some of the districts and the state was, "Just don't do anything".

Right. "You're so poorly prepared

to deliver, just don't try to deliver anything to anyone", which that total abdication just made me sick to my stomach that that was actually official guidance in a number of places.

So you're right, Julie, in some places, it was just a full stop interruption, not a disruption.

Yeah. Let me turn quickly

to Dr. Tucker.

Would love to get...

Maybe we can do two things.

I wanna know what happened in the transition in Douglas County, but give us the 60 second summary of what you were trying to accomplish academically in Douglas County.

How would you describe your academic aims there, and then what happened when you made the transition to remote? Well, Tom, most folks who know me know that I'm the grandson of a Baptist minister, and I can't do anything in 60 seconds, certainly not speak, but I will do my best.

This is gonna be a three peppermint sermon, right? Oh, yes, I'll do my best 60 second sermon.

This has been an educational epiphany for us, and I'll start with that, in that, we always wondered, "Was the American educational system, "public educational system, "that serves 55 million kids each day, you know, was it a robust system?".

"Was it an educational system?" "Was it an equitable system?" I think over the last seven or eight weeks those questions have been answered.

Also, the importance that public education plays in society, that public education plays in democracy.

I think once this begins to settle down, we're gonna have a renewed appreciation for education, and the power of public education, especially as it relates to our democracy, America's democracy.

And we're also seeing this education being played out, and the power of education being played out throughout the entire world.

As we jumped into teaching and learning, our goal was, first and foremost, to ensure that we were addressing the social and emotional mental health of our students and our staff.

And I'm gonna say our staff, because many times, we forget the impact that crises contemplate on our staff and on our parents.

Right. It was the first

important thing.

Although we were able to pivot, and make the adjustment relatively quick, like most districts, and some districts, one would say, across the country, but I would say, every district, a traditional public school district in America had some challenges.

But we were able to make the pivot because we knew we wanted to address, first and foremost, the mental health needs of our students.

We wanted to build a stronger relationship with every villager in the village, because we knew our parents would be very important, because they'd have to become teachers, in addition to nurses, in addition to trying to hold down their own jobs.

And the third thing, we want to ensure that we continue to foster strong relationships with our kids.

And the fourth thing, we want to ensure that teaching and learning continued, and we had over 98% of our kids actively engaged with their process.

That's really exciting.

I do appreciate that you said, "It's staff and teachers", right? We've just seen a lot of heroic work done by food workers, and bus drivers, and custodians, so I appreciate that.

I also wanna give a shout out to one of your neighbors, Dr. Jason Glass in Jefferson County, Yes. the biggest

district in Colorado.

He's on our podcast next week.

His leadership has really been like yours, really terrific, and helped the big districts in Colorado make the shift to remote so well.

Lea Ann, tell us what happened at your online school.

Increased engagement.

Since families and students were at home more, they engaged more in school.

Wow. This created more

work for our teachers too, because our teachers now had a heavier workload, plus they had their own children at home Right. from the brick and mortar.

So we also were-- Dr. Tucker, did you also see that? We've heard that around the country, that it's been super challenging for teachers to deliver while they have their own kids at home.

Oh, absolutely.

As I said earlier, we're now asking parents to assume multiple paths, Yeah.

same thing for teachers, and you're adding one more, Right. because they had to

also be at home taking care of a loved one.

Yeah.

Sorry, Lea Ann.

Oh, that was actually one of my greatest stresses, is that you really cannot effectively teach whenever you're also Yeah.

caring for your children.

And so what we did immediately, is we did surveys to find out more about what our staff was experiencing, as well as our students, and then we worked on flex scheduling, we encouraged our teachers to do more team teaching.

We're a virtual school, but we still team teach.

And for them to do synchronous live lessons together, and just fill in where your colleague may have a struggle.

So our teachers were also able to focus on the standards more than what they've been able to, and that's because we were not working with the logistics of state testing.

So we're really expecting that with the work we were able to do this spring, with our students remaining engaged and captive in our learning management system, that we are going to see an acceleration of their skills, and we're not expecting a regression.

We did have to really consider the social work aspect of a virtual school.

So social workers in brick and mortar can go to the cafeteria, or in the hall, and, of course, whenever you're all at home, you can't do that, but we haven't had the opportunities to lay our eyes on as many of our students as brick and mortar has.

Yeah. So we're really

working on a self-advocacy approach for our families, is that we want to provide services for them, but you don't wanna overwhelm them with always telling them that you have these services, because not everyone needs them.

Some needs them more than others.

Right.

Lea Ann, did you see a bump in enrollment? Did some kids shift from the district's remote program to yours? We were not in the position of enrolling new students, because of the workload on our teachers, right? So that was a surprise.

And we did get a lot of requests for that.

What we have seen is that our intent to return is very high.

The students that are with us this year are planning on coming back.

And then, our year over year pipeline for enrollment is significantly higher than what it's been in the past.

Yeah.

Before I turn to Pete to get an update on Indianapolis, your comment on engagement is super interesting, and we'll get Pete's take on that.

I interviewed the CEO of Remind a few days ago, and their volume, that's the texting platform, their volume is up three fold, and Julie, it was five X in Miami-Dade.

Wow. The texting between

teachers, and parents, and students is dramatically increased.

I think one interesting thing that we've observed, Michael, this is like compared to how we view blended learning as occurring largely on a learning management system.

What we've seen in the last few weeks is, it's a learning management system, plus a texting platform, plus collaboration tools, plus video conferencing, right? You have the benefit of a thicker tech stack with more tools, but, right? All the challenges that that brings along with it.

So interesting, Lea Ann, that you mentioned this much thicker engagement.

That is part of the new phase that we're in that I think makes this much different than it would've been if it happened five years ago.

Pete, what happened in Wayne Township? Well, I think what's interesting, I very much track with what Lea Ann was saying, as well as Thomas, because what happened here, it's similar, and I think we've seen this in many places.

Interestingly enough, you know, we've been doing online learning since 1999,

and (mumbling) like this is a Blackboard sponsored event, because we helped develop this product called ANGEL Learning, which started here in town.

So we're real familiar with this idea of virtual learning.

What's interesting, though, you know, we've started two online schools, but that is only a small proportion of our educators, right? I mean, no elementary folks were involved in that.

It's very much secondary focused.

And so although we have knowledge and experience, it's very hard to transition that to the rest of the team.

And so what we see, I think, nationally, this boom in Zoom, the challenges that scaling has provided to LMS providers, communication platforms, like Remind to parents, or whatever it might be, you know, that's all just shot up through the roof.

And what we've seen with our staff, is that the ones that were not really well trained and experienced in the virtual and blended world, they've tried to do the best they could providing synchronous options for their students.

So that's the boom in Zoom, you know, as we love to joke about here.

And so I think one of the challenges as we look forward, and I love the point that was made, I think, by Michael, that, hey, this is now.., or maybe you, Tom, 90 days, right? That's what we've been sayin'.

We had three days to get ready for this.

We have three months to get ready for what's coming, and so, you know, what do we do next? And I think that the big challenge is providing the professional development to get those teachers the skills they need to be able to provide multiple modalities, and I think that's the exciting thing about what's happened now.

I'm not sure this, as Mike was saying, not really a true disruption, but it's definitely, you know, it's something that we're living under the uncertainty of, and thus, that's kind of creating a sense of like unknown for the future, which we can certainly take advantage to get us better prepared.

But here in Indianapolis, I think, generally speaking, given the fact that this is a compromised educational effort on everyone's part, we've done pretty well.

We're fairly confident that we've done the best we can with what we've been given.

The big question is, what do we do now given that we've got a little bit more time to get ready? Right. Which isn't

nearly enough time.

We know it takes about two years to get our online educators ready.

We don't have that.

All right, we're gonna come back and talk about that.

Hold that for just a minute.

Julie, what happened at ASU Prep Academy, and ASU Prep Digital? Well, under the direction of our amazing president, President Crow, we started six weeks in advance preparing for the day to make the transition.

For those of you that know, ASU's the largest university in the country, and has 45,000 online learners at the university level on a normal basis.

And so very, very deep into the belief that learning can be accomplished in an online environment.

So we started that planning very early, and we were able to make a seamless transition with our 12 schools, our 11 brick and mortar schools, with our digital school supporting it, literally, in 48 hours.

So our students came back from spring break, came in on Monday, picked up their laptops, their lunch, and hotspots if they needed it, and then on Tuesday, we had those students online.

You know, we had the advantage of, we have been working over the last two years to move all our schools to a blended eco system, and so all of our teachers had a Canvas account.

If they didn't have a Canvas account, they had a Google Classroom account.

So some of 'em we're doing more than others, and we had some schools that were ahead of others, but then we had the entire digital staff, which is highly trained and skilled in remote learning, as well as online learning, and so we were able to partner with immersion leadership, and immediately jump into training.

We did training for everybody on that first Monday.

Teachers had the option of coming in or staying home for that.

More training on Tuesday, and Wednesday, and Thursday, along with the students starting to kinda get their legs under 'em, and then we started doing optional trainings pretty much every day that teachers could opt into as they, you know, kind of discovered their needs.

We set up Zoom rooms for parents, for parent support, for student tutoring, for IT, so that there was somebody always essentially a click away to provide support.

And then we did what the others, what Lea Ann and Thomas talked about, in terms of surveying.

We began surveying our parents, our students, our teachers on a daily basis for a period of time.

That's great. We have been

really pleased that we had about an average of a 95% attendance rate over the last several weeks, and 80 to 90% of the teachers said, "They felt like that the training prepared them to do what they needed to do".

So it's been a great kind of success story for us.

That's exciting.

I wanna underscore a couple things.

One is surveying parents.

It's gonna be so critical going forward, for particularly the next two years, to have new ways to communicate with parents, and to build a set of temporary agreements that keep school communities moving forward.

So, you know, as we start to pivot to getting ready for the next couple years, I think that's tip number one, is that if you don't have a parent communication tool that includes polling options, you need one right now, because this ability to gauge interest in different solution sets, or how you do distance learning on site, then how you do remote, and how you do busing, and different schedule options, and different online options, it's gonna be super critical.

So parent communication, including surveying tools, is gonna be really important.

Let's pivot now, and start talking about re-opening.

Maybe, Pete, you can kick us off with a couple thoughts on...

First of all, do you agree that schools are gonna need a blended core, and that it's gonna have to be coupled to the ability to go remote quickly? Absolutely.

You know, there's no question that we're gonna see a resurgence.

We've established a new expectation as a society, right? Yeah. That at any moment

things just change.

You know, like Julie was saying, you know, you've got 24 hours, 48 hours, and we're gonna start going remote for the next however long.

So we have to be ready for that.

I think that what you were just talking about, in terms of the feedback from the teachers, from the parents, is really critical, that idea of student agency, and parent agency, and decisions, and choice, especially here in Indiana, choice is huge.

So that is gonna be an option that's going to be exercised.

So one of the conversations we're having here,

is how much will (mumbling) drop? So we need to stop hiring right now, because we might not have classes for those teachers, and you know, what about teachers that don't wanna come back? They have concerns.

They have health issues.

Right. You know,

how do we prepare them? So it's really a lot about, you know, getting all those things in place, cutting to the professional development that I was talking about when the contract ends on June 5th.

You know, do we bring those teachers in? You know, plenty of them are self-motivated, but, you know, how do you guarantee you're gonna be ready? So for us, we've kinda started a road back Back To School Committee about two weeks ago.

Every administrator is involved.

We've got about 158 partners on those committees.

I think seven of them, one of which is Return To Instruction, and the Return To Instruction Committee is really looking deeply at, how do we provide the various modes of education, and the ability to quickly shift to the everyone staying home version? Thank you.

I wanna underscore something that Julie said, where she talked about everybody being on a platform.

I think we just reached the point in education where we all or soon will realize that this is a team sport, that we can longer operate school as a set of independent contractors with folks doin' their own thing.

This is gonna force us to make some common decisions about common platform tools, common approaches through instructional materials so that we can move quickly from a blended environment at school to a blended environment in a remote setting.

And because you talked about some teachers not being able to come back, we're gonna have to have more staffing flexibility, where somebody's gonna be teachin' one grade one day, and another grade another day.

So for all of those reasons, I think we just entered an era of education as a team sport.

Michael, there's a couple questions about blended learning.

Maybe give us a quick definition of what you think blended learning is, and how that's different than online learning.

Yeah, absolutely.

So blended learning, what we're talking about is online learning that occurs in a brick and mortar school with teachers, where students have some element of control over, to borrow from Julie Young's motto for the Florida virtual school, that time plays path and pace of learning.

Online learning, I would argue, can occur in a blended context, or it can occur in a remote context.

Right. And I think

the distinction that a lot of educators right now are trying to make is that, as we move to remote learning, you can do that through online learning tools, but you can also do it in very analog ways of printing out worksheets, and delivering textbooks, and assignments, and things of that nature.

And remote is sort of a place blended, is the place in online merged, and online can be done in either place, if that makes sense.

The other distinction, Tom, just to make it, 'cause it came out a few times.

I love the Zoom boom phrase, Pete, that you used.

It's been striking how many people have just tried to replicate what they did in a classroom on digital tools, and how that's given a bad name, I think, to some of the online learning out there.

When all of us who've been doing this for a long time know that the state of digital tools has never been actually better.

I mean, it's phenomenal what you can enable now, that I would argue, is better than the majority of teaching and learning experiences, in terms of building core knowledge at least of what you can do.

Diane Tavenner and I actually launched a podcast, Class Disrupted, which we're gonna tackle this in next week's episode, around what makes a good digital, you know, what makes a digital tool good or not, and the biggest thing is, if it's still passive in replicating sort of a one to many delivery, it's not going to be a very robust tool.

But online learning, as I think most of us think about it, are tools that are highly interactive, and promote active learning with lots of opportunities for rich and very rapid feedback for students, so that they can understand where they are, and then improve their performance.

I wanna get a couple of comments on that.

Pete, have you seen in Wayne Township the use of Zoom, and is that a new way to think about online and blended? Yeah, you know, it's an interesting thing.

You know, there are these spans that happen in every industry, and in education, and everywhere.

Zoom has been a part of this fad movement to trying to keep things the same as much as it could, is the way I look at it.

We're a good Google districts, so we typically use Meet, but, of course, all these free opportunities came across in the first couple of weeks from all the vendors, so we did see a spike as we're watching our utilization, and I, again, attribute that to the fact that everyone's trying to still do the synchronous thing, Right. and not looking

at those options.

And I think that really what my hope is for this moment, is that the teachers that have delved into this idea of doing some of these synchronous things might see some of the value, and what you were just talking about, in terms of like, what additional benefit can we provide to our students now? There is no better time in our past history than now to adopt these, and I think that if they've had a taste, my hope is that they will quickly then want more,

much like the vendors (mumbling), that you're gonna test drive to their services.

It has felt like a nice addition, to me, Michael, of at least some synchronous video check in, like advisory groups at the secondary level can meet synchronously on video.

That feels like an important and valuable development to the way we think about online and blended.

Let me turn to Dr. Tucker, and have you reflect on the preparations for next year, and how you're thinkin' about the decisions that you and your team need to make over the next 90 days? You know, as it's been pointed out, and Pete, you're right on the point, as we began to look at what education will be, or could be in the next 90 days, and we have 90 days now to try to make sense of this, and to try to do a better job in these next 90 days then we did the first week.

We were lucky in Douglas County.

We had a week to get everything prepared.

And we were fortunate in November of '18 when we passed our first MLO, mill levy override, and our bond issues to buy the technology, and I hope we'll have some time to talk about, who pays for this? How do we finance this? Because that is going to be a question of the day.

At the very top of the hour, we talked about how do we lean into this.

As we prepare for next year, we lean into it with a great deal of empathy.

We will try to learn from the past experiences over the last couple months, but we still need a great deal of empathy.

We need to continue to exercise a lot of grace.

I think someone mentioned this earlier, there is no way we can replicate this remote learning environment to equal that of in-person learning.

So helping our parents, helping our teachers, our administrators, all the villagers in our village understand it.

So we're starting with empathy, but at the heart of all of that, is bringing each of our people, each of our stakeholders, including students.

We left students out in this process as well.

And we have three taskforces, and we still have our application open.

So far, we have about 16 hundred people who have applied to sit on this taskforce Oh! to re-open our schools.

16 hundred people.

That's extraordinary.

Yeah. That's the--

It's like mind blowing.

That's gotta be like several times more than you had hoped for? Correct, but as we have said, folks want to be involved.

We cannot do-- That's awesome.

We cannot do this alone.

And in addition to surveying parents, we've done a lot of engagement using Zoom and Google Hangout to have town hall meetings-- Yep.

On every aspect of the current situation, and re-opening our school, because we cannot do this alone without our parents, the mental health community, Yeah. the Board of Education,

et cetera. Dr. Tucker,

do you have an online school in Douglas County? No, we do not, but like many folks, we've been working with blended learning for quite a bit.

Right. I came to Colorado

with some history in blended learning.

Back in Worthington, Ohio, we created several blended learning courses, and we have experience.

You know, the best thing that we do have is to bring some of this experience at work.

Well, I guess, how are you thinkin' about this? Do you see more demand for online learning, or are you gonna have a group of parents leave your brick and mortar schools for online schools in the fall, and how are you thinkin' about that? Well, that's gonna be a huge demand.

There's a huge demand, as Pete talked about, that we get better right away, that we seize the opportunity right now to improve these platforms as we rethink how we're gonna deliver teaching and learning.

This is a great opportunity.

This is a renaissance period, really, in public education.

It feels that way.

I wanna turn to Julie and Lea Ann, and get your take on this.

It does feel like we...

The last five years have been kind of a bummer for online learning.

There have been a bunch of crummy operators that have just not offered really high quality programs, and accountability systems that didn't do a very good job of judging the value provided by online programs.

So a mixture of bad reports, and bad operators.

But suddenly, online learning is back in the forefront.

Maybe Lea Ann, we could talk about you, and thinkin' about the pathy forward.

It sounds as like anticipate an uptick in enrollment, maybe you can tell us how you're thinking about this opportunity, and ways in which you're going to try to even make more improvements to your program? So it's definitely a time of problem solving, and it's definitely a time of engaging our parents and our students in what is going to work for them.

So what I see, is that there's more organizations, more agencies in the space, to help solve those problems right now, such as the College Board allowing the SAT to be tested online, and AP exams online.

Those are things that online schools needed to happen.

We have not had that support in the past.

In addition, there is a set of standards for teaching online classes, and we had a huge amount of teachers that were pushed into the virtual teaching space without any knowledge of those standards.

And so, you know, I think that we have a lot to do across the country, in terms of ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to understand what those standards are, to think about the instructional strategies that are used in brick and mortar right now, and how does that apply to virtual, such as the flip classroom, such as centers, like how do you take those types of concepts as a pedagogy, and then lay them over a virtual school-type-setting? So I'm passionate about the opportunities we're going to have to increase serving special populations, and how more organizations are gonna come on to support that.

Lea Ann, and thanks for talkin' about supporting teachers.

That's gonna be super important for all the reasons that we've talked about.

We're gonna have some teachers that can't, or won't, come to an on-site setting, that, for the first time, are gonna moved into delivering online.

We will suddenly have schools that re-open and then close, and move back to teaching online, and so we're gonna have to think deeply about both long-term, but real time teacher professional development and support.

So I appreciate that.

Julie, thoughts on the path forward, particularly for ASU Prep Digital? Yeah, sure.

I think really interesting, in terms of this whole situation has kind of thrust us forward to where we wanted to be anyway, and I think, you know, those of us that have been doing this for a long time, we know that parents vote with their feet, and we also, to Michael's point, there is gonna be a whole group of parents that have enjoyed this opportunity.

They've had a good experience.

They're really engaged with their kids, and they wanna continue that, and that's some of what we're hearing.

We're also hearing the same fear factor or, "No, I don't want my child going back into that environment".

So what we're doing at ASU Prep Academy, is we're gonna offer three different modalities of which the parents can elect what they would like to choose, in terms of, do they wanna be on campus? You know, potentially every day, you know, for some, that will be necessary.

Do they want a hybrid environment where they may come every other day, or mix it up a bit? And then, do they want a full-time option? And we're going to offer a full-time option to every one of our students K-12.

And then what we're also doing, is 'cause, you know, one of our missions, and goals, and why we exist is to create these new models for success, and then share them, is we're also working with our collaborative partners in Arizona.

We're doing five cohorts of training this summer that are all free of charge, and paid for out of philanthropy dollars to the university, that are five intense days of teaching teachers everything that they need to get started, or to move forward, if indeed, when indeed this happens again the fall.

And really, the premise is, you know, how do we help districts upskill their teachers and their leaders so that they can keep their kids? Because, you know, we're certainly expecting, and we're seeing an absolute surge in summer school enrollments right now.

We're expecting a surge in full-time enrollments in the fall.

But our commitment as ASU to the state of Arizona is really focused on, how do we help districts prepare, offer unique environments for their students and their teachers so that they can keep their kids, so that they will not lose them to other opportunities? That's great.

Pete, what would you add to that? Yeah, I 100% agree with that.

You know, what we have seen is that, for our teachers, you know, this has forced pre-K teachers, think about that, pre-K teachers to innovate.

They always innovate, but in such a different way, all the way to the 12th grade and the administrator.

And the challenge I think is, that you can only innovate with the tools that you have.

So if you're a pre-K teacher, you know, what's your tool set? It's a lot different than the teacher that is teaching an online class for us, and has developed three.

You know, that's a whole different tool set.

So how do you get the tool set of that person to everyone? I think that's the challenge that we're gonna have.

Tom, can I add somethin' to the tool set? The other thing we're going to do, is we're gonna put everybody on a digital platform, and so everybody will have a based curriculum that is all digital, but that doesn't mean that they have to use every bit of it.

They can add to it, they can supplement, what have you, but with the premise that one of the greatest stressors, I think, that we've seen nationwide, is teachers being forced to go home.

"Here's your Canvas account." "Go home, and go forth creating content." And so putting us in a position of being able to just flip a switch, and learning continues, regardless of where the child is sitting.

That's definitely a new emphasis on the continuity of learning.

I'd love to talk about some new models, and just the innovation that could come out of this.

A couple of you have touched on the idea of, Julie, you talked about the idea, this is actually been successful for maybe a small percentage of parents, and we've seen kids that have enjoyed more self-directed learning, more teenagers that like getting up at 9:30 or 10:30, and workin' at night.

And so it strikes me that we may have parents and young people with a new and different set of expectations, and that that may spur a new, along with the demands that we've been talking about, a new set of innovation.

So Michael, maybe you can kick us off with some thoughts on what we might see, in terms of new school models, either in districts, or charter schools, or independent schools? Yeah.

Yeah, well, I think, first, it shifts, right? What we think of as basic in the mind's of individuals, that a basic service schools provide now is this continuity and ability to move when something hits, and so that'll have a big perception shift in some of the things that all individuals are looking for schools to provide, and that will have to do with connectivity, the curriculum that Julie was just talking in place, and so forth.

The second thing I think it should do, is it should allow teachers and educators to be more vulnerable to students.

I think one of the worst lessons that we tried to impart is sort of, "Everything's okay, school goes on as usual, don't worry about it", when, in fact, we see it daily that we're all learning, and struggling, and making mistakes, and that's actually an incredibly important lesson to showcase to students that that is how you learn, right? That failure, and not knowing, and being able to as a question is actually a critical part of it.

And so I hope that we see more school embracing that we don't all have the answers, and we are all answer seekers, and creating together, right? And so that's a second opportunity for innovation.

I think a third one will be, you made the point, Tom, a lot of teens saying, "You know, the research is clear, like it's better when I sleep in", and so how do we create more flexible school environments that maybe have work-based components where I can start my day, at say, nine o'clock in an apprenticeship, or a community experience, or something like that, and go to the school building for projects and extracurriculars, and then go home, and take a couple online courses at night? Really flip the school day.

I'd love to see a lot more of that.

And really, your next book, Tom, that you're writing about, in terms of how people can make a difference through education and contribute, I think, is a critical piece we'd love to see here.

And then, the last two I would throw in there is that, I think a lot of parents have seen that their kids can get through the school work in about two hours, like even when schooling is fully done, like I can actually go through this material pretty quickly, and so they're asking two questions.

One, what do you do with the rest of the time ordinarily? And we know that, often, it's taken up with classroom management, transitions, sort of the industrial model of, I have to deliver in the same pace, and so forth, to a lot of folks.

But the opportunity set, I think, is to start to create schooling models that actually help students build, what Diane Tavenner calls, "habits of success", right? Agencies, executive function, and all these things that are critical.

And then the second piece is, the knowledge delivery through, I would argue, robust digital tools is critical, but in the context of interesting questions, problems, and projects.

Yeah. And so

I would love to see schools start to shift to be very thoughtful in the integration of all those aspects.

So thanks for mentioning success skills.

We're clearly, especially with the lack of state testing, we're gonna see an acceleration of this emphasis on the skills that you really need to succeed in life.

I wonder, Lea Ann and Julie, what will your schools, or do you see more online operators start paying more attention to success skills to social and emotional learning? Yes, so that's really what makes an effective teacher, that's really what makes an incredible school, and that's not different in online versus brick and mortar.

We do have to learn different ways of being in touch with the students, and helping them to experience some of the social interaction, but, you know, I think now that there's so many other organizations in the virtual space that that's happening.

We had an online Yeah.

prom this year.

We've had since graduation, Yeah. and that's exciting.

Julie, you're-- Yeah, I would agree.

Agree? Yeah, I would agree.

We unfortunately had to cancel our online prom, but it was going to be a first for me.

I think, you know, what we've known for years is that strong online programs are high touch and high tech, Yeah. and that high touch

cannot be replaced, Yep. and it just is,

and so I think we're gonna see a surgence of that.

That's great.

Now it's Dr. Tucker that talked about the power of a relationship.

Boy, that's really been super clear that these innovations that we're talkin' about interest some of us, but it is super clear that relationships are core.

Dr. Tucker, what innovations are we gonna see in learning in Douglas County, at least in part as a result of this? I hope to see many of the things that my co-panelists have discussed, but as part of this educational epiphany, I think we're gonna see that a significant number of students have been able to do their two, 2 1/2 hour course work, but spend a great deal of time on a subject, a topic, or something of interest to them that they've spent a lot of time in, that they will probably engage in after their K-12 experience, and helping students. Yeah, picture--

In other words, helping those students learn to be independent thinkers, independent creative thinkers as well.

Yeah, yeah, I love that.

You know, I just went and grabbed somethin' real quick.

It's this thing.

It's called a blueprint for digital learning, right? And so we've been usin' this 2011, and just sort of is how we've done our whole digital roll out, how online is a part of that.

Right. And we read

John Haydn's work a while back on habit of, I don't think it's called a success, but we've made a version of it called Habits of Success, and one of the things that I love that we did when we talked through this was that, Habits of Success, there it is, is a foundational part of our digital learning blueprint, because there's that whole piece, as Julie was saying, where you have to be high tough, you have to be teaching these skills at a level, what Michael said, in terms of, you know, two to three hours, and then what? Well, that's really a great question, because I think that's one of the big aha's that our parents have had, is that we can be a lot more efficient, and then maybe we could focus on co-op opportunities, and these habits of success really, you know, getting traction.

Yeah. You know,

I think that's really critical.

It's one of the things I hope really comes out of all of this.

We've only got-- Tom.

We only have a couple minutes left.

I just wanna, if anybody's got a question, make sure you add it to the chat box.

We might have room for one more.

I'll just mention that, in a couple days, there's gonna be an announcement by a couple of foundations that are creating a new fund to focus on innovative, new, sort of out of system models, and I'm really excited about that space.

And for Lea Ann and Julie, many of these models sort of start with an online learning platform, and then they're microschools, they're co-op schools, they're hybrid schools, their kids are in school for a couple of days a week, and as Thomas described, they may have more time for community-connected activities.

So I think we're gonna see a golden age of model innovation come out of this.

It's gonna be super challenging for all of us, but we will see a lot of interesting new models that better meet the needs of students and parents.

We had a question about special education, and I think it's important to be concerned about that.

Anybody wanna talk about that? Pete, are you worrying about complex needs, special needs? Yeah, we have had quite a few deep conversations about that.

With the online school, as Julie and Lea Ann would relate to, how do we provide those services? But then especially in this remote learning context where students aren't electing to have this.

This has been something hoisted on them and their parents, and especially our super high need student population, special ed, it's been quite a challenge, and so as a result of that, kinda that live piece has been lost that is very critical.

And so in this moment, a lot of those educators have actually been very much in touch with the families, providing them with resources, and although they can't come in to the home, showing up at the home, providing some degree of counseling through, you know, a socially distanced opportunity, and then, you know, in terms of what we can provide, trying to modify as much as possible.

But frankly, it's a real reach to try to serve all special ed students that show up live at brick and mortar school in this environment.

I don't know what Dr. Tucker thinks, but that's been our experience.

Yeah, Pete, very similar to what you all are doin' there in suburban Indianapolis.

Weeks of gettin' started with the belief just because we've gone to a remote teaching and learning environment does not mean we are giving up our requirement to fulfill students a free and appropriate public education.

Each student of our students has been contacted by at least one adult in the building, especially our students on IEPs, as well as our gifted students as well.

Our students who have specific physical needs, that any apparati that was in our buildings that we delivered those to the homes,

dropped those things off, and our (mumbling) teachers are in constant contact with our students.

Just last week, we had a town hall meeting focusing on our students, on IEPs, and social and emotional learning, and mental health-type things to ensure that we are touching base with every student in our district.

On the subject of special and complex needs, I wanna give a shout out to Dr. Eric Tucker.

He's the Executive Director of Brooklyn Laboratory School.

This morning, on GettingSmart.com, Dr. Tucker pinned a blog on six principles that put equity at the core.

Dr. Tucker and I also, a week ago, released a 10 point plan to re-open schools.

And the reason I mention Brooklyn Lab, it's all 100% poverty, and 30% complex needs.

So Dr. Tucker is really an expert on dealing with both special and complex needs.

So take a look at that.

Wow, it's been such a treat to spend time with our panelists.

We've had a chance to interact with some of America's best educators.

This might be a challenge, Thomas, but (speaking incoherently) in 15 seconds, what advice would you give to educators? That we're gonna get through this.

I mean, public education is the cornerstone of American democracy, and we've had tough times in the 385, 400 years of public education, and we'll get through this, and we'll come out even stronger.

Great, appreciate that.

Pete, closing thought? You know, I think crisis is essentially small trends that have always been happening, and we make 'em permanent.

So I think a pin has been placed into this idea of virtual and blended learning in our society today.

And so education needs to come to the students, but that's something that's clear.

How we get that done, I don't know exactly, but we definitely need to connect with the issues that have risen their ugly heads, Yeah. and hopefully,

that's something that the FCC and others can help us with.

That's great.

Lea Ann, a thought for teachers and leaders? So online learning is multi-dimensional, and it is so important to dig into standards.

Julie had mentioned content.

Teachers cannot have the pressure of pushing out all of the content.

There is accessibility requirements that have to be met.

So there's really a big responsibility on the leadership of the schools and the district to ensure that these teachers have the support so they can focus on the students.

And Julie, we had a question in the chat about your teacher professional learning.

Is that available just in Arizona or more broadly? We can provide it more broadly.

We are providing it free of charge in the state of Arizona, and for a small fee outside.

So I can give that information to the organizers, and they can get it out to the participants.

That's awesome.

Thanks for bein' with us.

And Michael, the last word, what should we do? Learning starts with asking a good question.

You've asked plenty of them today, Tom, so you've gotten us off to a good start.

Thanks, everybody.

I'm gonna turn this back over to John Woods to take us out.

Looks like John may be having some, oh, there we are.

Great. (male laughing)

John, we can't hear you.

If you can just make sure your microphone's turned on.

Sure, I want to thank everybody for joining us.

Great stories.

John, we've lost your audio again, I'm sorry.

How about now? That's better, now we can hear you.

(male chuckling)

Oh, now we can't hear you again.

(male laughing)

At least we get to close out with a laugh.

You gotta love technology-- John, I can't hear-- Yeah, that's right.

John, if you wanna just keep checking your mic, I will just add a couple of things here in closing.

Definitely wanna thank Tom for moderating our panel today.

We'd like to thank all of our panelists for presenting today.

We've definitely picked up a lot of really great insights.

Personally, I think I'm gonna have to go back and watch this three more times just to let it all soak in.

But a lot to think about it as we move forward.

Just as a reminder, this is just the first of several webinars that we will be doing.

I would like to invite you all to join us for the upcoming webinars as well.

If you haven't already, go ahead and register for part two of this kickoff.

You can register by visiting: Go.Blackboard.com/virtual/teaching/academy.

The next webinar will happen on the 17th of June from 12:00 to 1:30 Eastern time again, and we'll be discussing where we're going.

How do we succeed in the new normal? And we're really looking forward to that.

We've got a great panel joining us for that as well.

And also, I would encourage you to check out the Virtual Teaching Academy.

Reserve your seat for that.

That will be a series of ongoing professional development courses provided by the Alliance For Virtual Learning.

So with that, again, we thank everyone who participated.

We'd like to thank all of you in our audience who joined us today.

I know there were a lot of questions we didn't have time to get to.

We'd encourage you to keep those conversations alive, and keep those questions coming.

We will follow-up.

You will get an email from our team with a link to this recording, and, again, we'd encourage you to join us for the upcoming webinars as well.

Thank you to everybody who participated, and we hope you have a great day.

We will see you in a couple weeks at part two.

Bye, everybody. Bye-bye.